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## Old Hickory, Tennessee (1967)

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# Old Hickory, Tennessee (1967)

At Andrew Jackson Elementary

a classmate asked me, “Are you a Yankee,  
or a Rebel?” I’d moved there from the West  
Coast, not thinking our war was still going.

The black kids all lived in one neighborhood  
near the boundary of Jackson’s estate.

Hopewell. From the bus I noticed their mules  
and chickens on Liberty Street’s dirt lots.

In the afternoons young men stood smoking  
outside the general store. But it meant  
little to me. I didn’t understand  
what I now know. I rode my bike, played ball.

All the while, the past was rushing toward me  
like a thunderstorm you hear from far off.